Numb. 87.

The Female Tatler.

Written by a Society of Ladies.

Ridentem dicere verum quid vetat ?

From Monday January 23, to Wednesday January 25, 1710.

SOPHRONIA's Day.

BEING admitted into this Ingenious Society, tho' moſt unworthy the great Honour they have Confer'd, and allow'd the happy Priveledge of forgetting my own Faults, and wholly buoying my ſelf with thoſe of others; that the World may know what to expect from the Converſation of my *Drawing-Room*, I ſhall begin with theſe Generous Reſolutions: Never to Record the Dictates of Ignorance, Envy, Ill-nature or Revenge, but to oblige all that grace my Day to confine their Diſcourſe to the Proper, the Uſeful, and the Diverting. Purſuant to this, in the firſt Place, I exclude all Politicks, which way deſigned, or however expreſs'd, whether Metophorical, Allegorical, Panegyrical or Satyrical, as a Topick moſt unfit for a Female Aſſembly, and only adapted to the few able Heads and Loyal Hearts, whoſe great Prerogative it is to debate what Concerns the Safety and Proſperity of the Publick. Next, I forbid any *Beau* to give his Opinion of the Sublime, or the Myſteries in Authors, but to diſplay his Skill, and Employ his Rhetorick on Things within his reach, as Snuff, *Billet-Doux*, Joynts, Canes, Weather or Opera's, *&c.* No Old Batcheldor muſt be allow'd the Liberty of railing at Women here, nor Stale Maids at Matrimony, having read elaborate Encomiums on both, tranſmitted to Poſterity by experienc'd and Authentick Judges. The Errors of Love between Fifteen and Twenty, ſhall be heard with Compaſſion, from thence till Thirty with Severity, and from the grave *Era* with extream Contempt. I will have a large Blank Volume for Evil *Fame*, wherein I may Write the Names of the incorrigible, and a Table of Braſs for Good *Fame*; in one I mean to ſet down the Characters of the Innocent, and in the other the Reform'd: Hiſtory, Philoſophy, Poetry or Prophecy, as each of them occur, I ſhall Communicate with great Sincerity. Thus Things paſt, preſent and to come, will afford continual Variety, and for the flights of Wild Imagination, the Embelliſhment of Story, and the Improvement of Fable, I ſhall reſerve them for my Dreams, according to the practice of this Polite Age.

I had no ſooner made an end of this ſhort Harangue, but I found my Company conſiderably Leſſon; more than one half went Murmuring away, ſelf convicted, that they had made no Obſervations but what I ſhou'd reject with Scorn: Thoſe that remain'd ſeem'd infinitely pleaſed with what they had heard, and propoſed this Method for the future, That we ſhou'd reduce our Converſation to general Heads, and alot a convenient Subject for each Day, enquiring with pleaſing Induſtry and cloſe Application of Mind, into the ſecret Springs of Paſſion and the Original Motive of Good and Evil: That one of the Society ſhou'd relate a Story by way of Example, and the reſt approve or condemn, according to their ſeveral Sentiments. This agreed with my Deſign, and I intreated them to keep up to a Rule that ſeem'd ſo well choſe: We concluded to begin with *Inconſtancy*, it being *Dii Luni*, that Epidemick Vice, in Mankind Natural, but in our Sex inſpir'd ſometimes to Revenge, and often to prevent the Shame of being forſaken. *Lucinda* believed it in the firſt to be Reſult of a Weak Brain and a benigne Temper, which ſuffers itſelf to be prevail'd on by every ſlight Attraction; in the laſt the effects of a Credulous Faith and diſappointed Love, which throws itſelf into the Arms of a Second, that it may forget the anguiſh of a firſt Affection. *Arabella* thought it chiefly govern'd by Accident, and *Arteſia* by Time, the profeſs'd Enemy of Duration, that as he demoliſh'd Buildings, pull'd down Statues, blotted out Inſcriptions, tore the Records of Antiquity, and ſhuffled Truth with Falſhood, o're turned the Monuments of Virtue, ſo by the ſame malicious Power he defac'd the deepeſt Impreſſions of Fond Deſire, and ſwept the moſt binding Vows into eternal Oblivion. *Roſella* lifted up her Eyes, and confeſs'd, ſhe cou'd not think any one had it in their Choice to be True or Falſe as they pleaſed, inſiſting, that the Stars that guided the Birth diſpos'd of the Man, and if he was never ſo Deceitful, Perjur'd, and Ingrate, the Planets alone ought to bear the blame: That if the Moon happen'd to be in bad Company and ill Humour when the Child firſt entred upon the Stage of Life, he and his Friend ſhou'd feel the ſad Effects of it, even to the Curtain's being let down at the laſt dull Scene. Here I interrupted with ſome warmth, Can Vice and Virtue then depend, ſaid I, on ſuch precarious Turns of Fate as theſe? Can it be poſſible, that a drowſy Family, a ſlow Meſſenger, or Ten Thouſand other Probabilities, ſhou'd loſe the good Minute, and what was deſign'd an honeſt Citizen, produce a Stroling Player.

Here to prevent too eager a Diſpute, *Lucinda* interpos'd, and told us ſhe had thought of a Story that was not altogether improper or Foreign to our preſent Debate, concerning *Inconſtancy*. A Young Gentleman whom I'll diſtinguiſh by the Name of *Philaſter*, was Born to a Noble Fortune, the Heir of an Ancient Family, who valu'd themſelves more upon their Titles than the Virtues of their Predeceſſors, and would not have conſented to his Marrying without a long Scroul of Heraldry to have prov'd his high Birth. He liv'd in the Neighbourhood of a Young Virgin that had nothing to boaſt of but Innocence and Beauty: He had ſeen her at her Window and at *Maſs*, for they were

were of that Perſwaſion, and felt the bewitching Softneſs of Young Love: He watch'd all Opportunities of being heard privately, and in a fatal Hour ſucceeded. The Lady was an Orphan, ill us'd and helpleſs; he Sued, he Swore, he Languiſh'd and Diſpair'd, and was poſſeſs'd of all the Artillery of Love, a graceful Perſon, an agreeable Wit, and the moſt prevailing Eloquence of eager Paſſion. She liſten'd and was loſt; he ſhow'd her the Impoſſibility of Marrying without being Diſinherited, which wou'd not only Ruin them, but Condemn their Poſterity to Servitude and Sorrow, if ever it come out whilſt his Father lived, and there was no depending on the Secrecy of a Third Perſon: That he muſt live in perpetual Apprehenſion if not diſcover'd, and that was ſufficient to blaſt his hopes of Greatneſs, and daſh the Joys of Love; but whatever was Sacred, whatever was Solemn, ſhou'd bind the Contract between themſelves, which he wou'd confirm the firſt Hour he was his own Diſpoſer, as the Church requir'd. Thus the unwary Innocent was caught, and he by the aſſiſtance of a Friend had her convey'd to Lodgings, where ſhe liv'd unknown, and ſo by his Management remain'd wholly unſuſpected. His Paſſion abated not with Poſſeſſion, he doated to exceſs: Some Years roll'd on, and a Son Crown'd their Wiſhes; he thought himſelf the happieſt of his kind, and held it impoſſible to be Falſe; but alas! how little do we know our ſelves.

A Lady of equal Birth and Fortune, not Sixteen, and extravagantly handſome, was invited by his Father with her Relations to a Ball: The old Gentleman had a deſign to inſnare his Son's Heart, not knowing of its preingagement, and to that end ſurpris'd him, that he had no time to arm his Soul againſt the invincible Charm of ſuperior Beauty; he gaz'd and ſigh'd, Fear, Deſire, Remorſe at once diſtract him, Duty, Intereſt and Inclination urge him on; but Gratitude and Honour keep him back; at laſt he flyes to his firſt Choice, in hopes to loſe in her dear Arms this wild Extaſie; but all was taſtleſs and incipid and ſo paul'd, that he cannot Counterfeit a Joy; ſhe ſoon perceiv'd the change, wept, and begg'd to know the Cauſe, he wou'd have conceal'd it; but mov'd by her Intreaties, and having the beat of Nature to Sincerity, he told her all his Heart, aſſur'd her he had ſtrove againſt the incroaching Miſchief, but ſtrove in vain; this was Thunder to the poor diſmay'd: What did ſhe not ſay? inſpir'd by Love, Jealouſie and Deſpair; he pitied and advis'd, but Love was fled, nor cou'd his utmoſt endeavours recall the fleeting Boy; after ſome time paſt in fruitleſs ſtruglings, between a growing and declining flame, he came to the Unfortunate and bid her prepare to leave the Town with her Son, for the Marriage was agreed, and ſhe muſt not be heard on; he wou'd take a particular care of them both in ſome remote place, which he wou'd find ſpeedily for her, and in a few Days, was as good as his word, and order'd her to be ready for her Journey on the next Morning.

She being well reſolv'd what to do, told him, ſhe ſubmitted to her hard deſtiny without Complaint, that all ſhe ask'd for ruin'd Virtue, and for injur'd Truſt, was leave to take her laſt farewell; ſhe begg'd he wou'd Sup with her that Evening and Conſtrain himſelf to ſuffer a few Hours, ſince he knew they were the laſt ſhe ever ſhou'd make tedious to him; this was ſo obliging a Requeſt that he readily granted, viewing her ſtill with pity and imperfect gratitude; at Night he brought his Friend, and confeſs'd his ſhame and regret for what he was about to do, and wiſh'd there was a power on Earth cou'd ſnatch him from the Tyranny of the ungenerous Paſſion that deſtroy'd him; ſhe had prepar'd the Wine he lov'd, and gave it him often; about the midſt of the Entertainment, he complain'd of Sickneſs, and unnatural Heat, upon which ſhe fell upon her Knees, implor'd his Pardon, and bid him think on Eternity, for he was poiſon'd: 'Tis not eaſie to conceive how many different Paſſions agitated his Mind, at the ſame Minute he heard the dreadful ſound, I have not done it for Revenge, ſaid ſhe, I was no more able to outlive you, than to beat your being anothers; I have pledg'd the fatal Draught, and ſhall go with you on the gloomy way, ſend for a Prieſt and for your Father; he conjur'd his Friend to fly for both: In the mean time they look'd with Melancholly Concern on their unhappy Off-ſpring, by turns Careſſing and Condoling his helpleſs Infancy. With incredible haſt the Father and the Confeſſor came, they ſent the Friend for a Phyſician, tho' ſhe aſſur'd them the Poiſon ſhe had bought of an *Italian* no Antidote cou'd Expel, nor had they an Hour to live: On this the Confeſſor approach'd, and as ſhe own'd her Crime with *Philaſter*, ſaid, ſhe ſhou'd Die with Horrour, unleſs in theſe laſt Moments of Life for both their Souls Eternal good, the Holy Father might make them one: *Philaſter* join'd in the Petition, truly ſatisfied that what ſhe had done was owing to the exceſs of Love, and a juſt puniſhment of his Ingratitude and Perjury; he earneſtly recommended his Son to the Care of his Father, and then deſir'd the Prieſt to join their Hands and pronounce Abſolution, which was as much as they had Life to hear: This done the Friend return'd with a Doctor and Apothecary, who were for pouring down Oyl, but the Lady Claſping the Knees of *Philaſter*, and ſhedding Tears of Joy, beſought him to forgive her honeſt Artifice, for he had drank nothing but a large quantity of Gore-Stone, which aided by Imagination, has aſſiſted to make me bleſt; the Father, the Friend, all applauded her Pious Cheat; *Philaſter* Embrac'd her with more tenderneſs than till that moment he had ever known, nor lives their a happier Pair.

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